

Asheville City Council
Planning and Economic Development Committee

3:30 p.m., March 20, 2012
City Hall, First Floor Conference Room

Minutes

Present: Vice Mayor Esther Manheimer, Chair; Councilmember Cecil Bothwell;
Councilmember Marc Hunt

Staff: Gary Jackson, Bob Oast, Sam Powers, Judy Daniel, Ken Putnam, Shannon Tuch

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on March 20, 2012, in the First Floor Conference Room, City Hall. Vice Mayor Manheimer called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from the February 21, 2012, meeting were approved as amended.

2. Updates

525 Broadway Site

Judy Daniel, Planning Director, updated the committee on the 525 Broadway site, formerly known as the Momentum site. Internal staff group has met with UNC Asheville officials and have subcommittees working on various concerns. John Pierce, CFO of UNC-Asheville and Ms. Daniel will be meeting with the Montford Community group that evening to keep them updated. Councilman Hunt clarified that one of the issues they would be discussing was the total cost of greenway implementation, and how that matches up with the \$60,000 that RiverLink has pledged towards completing the project.

Business Improvement District

Susan Griffin, Chair of Downtown Management Committee, gave the update with the attached powerpoint presentation. A 7% tax rate would bring in approximately \$500,000. The committee is asking the City and County to contribute an additional amount totaling \$300,000 to help them meet their estimated budget of \$800,000. Councilman Hunt pointed out that the revenues needed for year one might not be the full budget amount and encouraged the group to work with the City's Finance staff to discuss cash flow options.

Councilman Bothwell voiced concerns for property owners not directly in the downtown area who would also have to pay these taxes. Ms. Griffin shared that the group was doing a tremendous amount of outreach, so all will understand what they are being asked to fund. Also, that the Board is structured heavily with the major property owners, and that all property owners will have a chance to speak at public hearing scheduled for May 22, 2012.

Vice Mayor Manheimer spoke in support of the BID proposal.

3. New Business

There was no unfinished business.

4. Unfinished Business

Charlotte Street

Ken Putnam, Transportation Department Director, addressed the committee by referencing his memorandum to Gary Jackson, City Manager, dated February 27, 2012 (attached).

After discussion, the committee recommended that full Council consider the following: prepare a request for qualifications (RFQ) to perform a comprehensive traffic operations study (of the Charlotte Street Corridor, which is defined as that section of street from the I-240 westbound on/off ramps to Edwin Place) that would model all of the affected intersections and would provide critical information regarding roadway geometry and signal timing and phasing. The estimated cost is \$50,000. The committee suggested using a combination of this year's funds and next year's funds to cover the expense.

Haywood Street Property

Gary Jackson, City Manager, stated that the purpose of the discussion was to facilitate the Committee's review and response to the development and land purchase proposal from McKibbon Hotel Group (MHG). In order to facilitate the review, the group would receive two briefings: one from City Attorney Bob Oast, who would cover how a purchase contract might be structured and how a development agreement might be negotiated with MHG. The second would be a presentation from MHG speaking to the elements, terms and the plan with which they want to proceed and which would also be incorporated into that contract and development agreement.

Requested action from the Committee was to evaluate the information received and guidance from the City Attorney and to evaluate the proposal as presented by MHG and decide a course of action. Options include:

- Determine that the project and its framework was ready to move forward with a recommendation from this Committee to full Council, which would be a favorable recommendation to go to the next step.
- Ask of further work from the city attorney and city management staff or for more work to be done by the MHG.
- Other options as determined by the Committee.

After the presentations and much discussion, Councilman Bothwell moved that the item go to full Council for consideration with advice to staff concerning working on the conditions that would be applied, particularly with an eye to the realignment of the street, and other conditions, incorporated into the process.

Mr. Jackson wrapped up the discussion by articulating the following next steps: project would not be considered by full Council for at least a month; talk to the Asheville Design Center regarding their expectations; seek consultation from development attorneys on how to structure the additional processes PED suggested; reach out to representatives of the Basilica and other neighbors to advise them that there would be an opportunity for additional input from them in this process as it moved forward in addition to just the ordinance requirements that Council puts on any property; have additional consultation/conversations with MHG on how those terms could be fleshed out. That way, when the proposal comes to Council, Council might have better idea on how this might work. City Council would decide as a body as to whether the City would move forward with the McKibbon proposal.

The motion was seconded, and approved unanimously.

5. Presentations and Public Comment

Public Comment:

Dave Johnson, a professional city planner, fellow of the ACIP, practiced planning in NYC, Boston, and Washington, DC and taught at University of Tennessee for 17 years, gave a list of what he would like to see in the ultimate proposal (attached). Mr. Johnson was also a founding board member of the Asheville Design Center, and offered the ADC to help the process of the community to reach a consensus and move in the direction everyone ultimately wants to go.

Rick Jackson, standing in for Lou Bisette, (representing the Basilica of St. Lawrence) was joined by John Ellis, architect with Bowers Ellis & Watson (parishioner of the Basilica and a member of its preservation committee) and presented an overview of the development plans the Basilica has for the site. (See attached "A Request for Qualification to Acquire City of Asheville Owned Property.") They respectfully requested the City's consideration of their project, in order to preserve the architectural value of the Basilica. Vice Mayor Manheimer asked Mr. Ellis if the Church would be interested in participating in a road realignment agreement, even if the Basilica was not the developer of the site, to allow for the development of a plaza or open use space in front of the Basilica. Mr. Ellis indicated he could not answer for the Bishop.

Anne Fitzgerald Smith spoke in support of a design that incorporated a plaza. She indicated that her concern with the McKibbon proposal was their project on the 51 Biltmore site. She also believed that it was time to give something back to the Catholic church as they had contributed much to the community over the years.

Bruce Hazzard, Chair of the Downtown Commission, indicated the importance of looking at the project in a holistic manner, especially in light of the changes that have occurred since 2008, especially the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan and for the betterment of the public.

Councilman Hunt spoke in support of uses for the property that would compliment the functions of the civic center.

Chad Roberson spoke for the McKibbon Hotel Group by indicating that MHG welcomed the opportunity to speak with both the Basilica and the Downtown Commission on design opportunities for plaza area.

Grace Curry, a member of the Charlotte Street Streetscape Committee, voiced her pleasure that full Council was going to consider funding for a comprehensive study of the Charlotte Street Corridor as she saw the overall benefit for the community.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00p.